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EPA Statement – San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site Data

Contact: David Gray, gray.david@epa.gov

DALLAS – (Sept. 28, 2017) EPA is directing the potentially responsible parties of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund site in Texas to take immediate action to address damage to the protective cap and high-levels of underlying waste material found at one of the samples on site. EPA received preliminary data from sediment samples collected by EPA's dive team from fourteen areas at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund site.

Samples from one of the fourteen areas confirmed the protective cap had been damaged and the underlying waste material was exposed. The sample showed dioxins at 70,000 ng/kg. EPA recommend clean up level for the site is 30 ng/kg.

EPA has directed both International Paper and Industrial Maintenance Corporation, the potentially responsible parties (PRPs) for the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund site in Harris County, to conduct supplemental sampling to ensure that the exposed waste material is isolated. The dioxin in the waste material does not dissolve easily in water but it can migrate further out into the surrounding sediments. The supplemental sampling will determine the extent, if any, of this migration.

Initial repairs have already been taken at the damaged area where the protective rock was missing. If necessary, EPA will direct additional visual dive operations to check for displacement in the stone cover of the protective cap and more fully evaluate the cap for damage by Hurricane Harvey.

The PRPs developed an Operations, Monitoring, and Maintenance Plan under Federal Order by the EPA and completed work to prevent wastes from continuing to migrate to adjacent areas including the San Jacinto River in July 2011. The Order allows the Agency to require additional measures and investigations deemed necessary by the Agency from its periodic inspection of the protective cap. EPA is exercising that authority today. EPA divers determined that additional measures were necessary.

The PRP conducted similar repairs in December 2015. EPA proposed long-term remedy for the site has 150,000 cubic yards of waste removed and disposed of offsite.

EPA will continue to provide updates about the status of the Superfund site, and continue to work with the PRPs to ensure that risk to human health and the environment is managed as best as possible.

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